

A **SANTOSH KUMARI**

v.

STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR & ORS

B SUPREME COURT, JAMMU AND KASHMIR
(2011) 9 SUPREME COURT CASES 234
JM PANCHAL SCJ
HL GOKHALE SCJ
C [CRIMINAL APPEAL NO: 1660-62-2011]†
13 SEPTEMBER 2011

[CRIMINAL PROCEDURE] Criminal Procedure Code 1973 - Sections 228, 240 and 211 to 214 - Proper framing of charge - Requirements of - Accused should be informed with certainty and accuracy the exact nature of charge brought against him - Accused person must be able to know substantive charge he will have to meet and to be ready for it before evidence is given - Particulars necessary to be given in charge depends upon facts and circumstances of each case - Criminal trial - Charge (paras 15 to 18)

E *[CRIMINAL LAW] Penal Code 1860 - Sections 34, 114 and 149 - Nature of charge, when any of these sections is involved - Reiterated, in such a case charge is a rolled-up one involving direct liability and constructive liability without specifying who are directly liable and who are sought to be made constructively liable - Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, ss. 211 to 215*

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Held:

G It is well-settled law that in drawing up a charge, all verbiage should be avoided. However, a charge should be precise in its scope and particular in its details. The charge has to contain such particulars as to the time and place of the alleged offence and the person against whom it was committed as are reasonably sufficient to give the accused notice of the matter with which he is charged.

H One of the requirements of law is that when the nature of the case is such that the particulars mentioned in the charge do not

I † Arising out of SLPs (Crl.) Nos. 751-53 of 2011. From the Judgment and Order dated 20 October 2010 of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu in Crl. Revision No. 29 of 2008, Petition under s. 561-A CrPC, No. 54 of 2009 and Bail Application No. 26 of 2010

give the accused sufficient notice of the matter with which he is charged, the charge should contain such particulars of the manner in which the alleged offence was committed as would be sufficient for that purpose. If A is accused of the murder of B at a given time and place, the charge need not state the manner in which A murdered B. (para 16)

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If necessary information is conveyed to him in other ways and there is no prejudice, the framing of the charge is not invalidated. The essential part of this part of law is not any technical formula of words but the reality, whether the matter was explained to the accused and whether he understood what he was being tried for. Sections 34, 114 and 149 IPC provide for criminal liability viewed from different angles as regards actual participants, accessories and men actuated by a common object or a common intention; and the charge is a rolled up one involving the direct liability and the constructive liability without specifying who are directly liable and who are sought to be made constructively liable. (para 18)

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Willie (William) Slaney v. State of M.P., AIR 1956 SC 116 : 1956 Cri LJ 291 : (1955) 2 SCR 1140, applied

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[CRIMINAL PROCEDURE] Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 - Sections 211 to 215, 226 to 228 and 464(1) - Framing of charge - Particulars to be stated - Description of offences, if required beyond what is stated in ss. 211 to 214 - Prejudice - Whether caused - Stage to which trial had progressed - Relevance of - Charges framed against accused for committing rioting and murder - Particulars required by law stated by trial court while framing charge - Nature of charge was clearly understood by accused, which was evident from: (i) finding recorded by trial court after framing charge that nature of charge was very well understood by accused, (ii) averments made in accused's revision petition challenging order framing charges, and (iii) nature of cross examination of eyewitnesses by accused - There was nothing to suggest or indicate that accused was misled or failure of justice was occasioned by any error or omission in charge - Five witnesses had already been examined and supported prosecution - Fact that trial against accused has/had made considerable progress inasmuch as material evidence of eyewitnesses to occurrences was recorded by trial court could not have been ignored while deciding question whether proper charge against each accused was framed or not - Held, High Court's order setting aside order framing charge deserves to be set aside - Trial court directed to complete trial as expeditiously as possible - Ranbir Penal Code, 1989 (2 of 1989 Smvt.)

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- A (1932 AD) - Sections 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 - Criminal Procedure Code, 1989 Smvt. (1933 AD) - Sections 267, 268 and 269, Ch. XIX, Ss. 561-A and 225 - Penal Code, 1860, Ss. 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 (paras 21 to 33)
- B The argument of the respondent accused was that the charge was invalid because there was no mention in the order of the trial court indicating the specific offence found to have been *prima facie* committed by one or the other accused individually or jointly nor was there any indication regarding the specific names of the offences sufficient for description in the order of framing charge,
- C but only sections of the law under which the offences were found to have been committed, were mentioned.

Allowing the appeals, the Supreme Court

D Held:

- A patent error of law apparent on the fact of the record was committed by the High Court in coming to the conclusion that in the order of framing charge there was a mere mention of the sections of the law which was likely to prejudice the accused in his trial, as the accused would be disabled to know the exact charge he had to face. Having noticed the charge which was separately framed against each accused, the inevitable conclusion to be reached is that the High Court erred in law in holding that
- E it was obligatory for the trial court to have indicated in its order and the charge-sheet the description of the offences for which one or the other accused had to be tried because all the necessary particulars which should be stated as required by law were already stated by the trial court while framing the charge. (para 30)
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- G **[CRIMINAL PROCEDURE]** Criminal trial - Practice and Procedure - Generally - Procedural Laws - Mere technicalities not to frustrate ends of justice - Irregularity is curable unless accused is prejudiced - Errors in charge, or even a total absence of a charge is curable - Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, ss. 211, 215 and 464 (para 17)
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- I **[CRIMINAL PROCEDURE]** Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 - Section 439 - Bail - Grant of bail - Sustainability of - High Court set aside order passed by trial court framing charge and directed release of accused persons pending consideration of prosecution case for framing charge by trial court - High Court granted temporary bail on ground that accused were facing trial over a period of three years - Record does not

show that prosecution was responsible in any manner at all for so-called delay - Accused are involved in commission of a heinous crime like murder - Witnesses were physically assaulted and threatened in court premises - They were also warned that if they gave depositions against accused they would be killed - Trial court rightly refused bail considering gravity of offence and apprehending that accused would tamper with evidence - Held, High Court while granting bail to accused has completely ignored and overlooked relevant factors which weigh heavily against accused - Release of accused on interim bail deserves to be set aside - Ranbir Penal Code, 1989 (2 of 1989 Smvt.) (1932 AD) - Sections 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 - Penal Code, 1860, ss. 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 (paras 11 and 35 to 39)

Chronological list of cases cited:

Willie (William) Slaney v. State of MP AIR 1956 SC 116 : 1956 Cri LJ 291 : (1955) 2 SCR 1140

*For the appellant - Nitin Sangra and Ms Hemantika Wahi, Advocates
For the respondents - RP Bhatt, Senior Advocate (Bimal Roy Jad, Vikram Rathore, Sunil Fernandes, Suhaas Joshi, Ms Astha Sharma and Yawar Massoodi, Advocates)*

JUDGMENT

JM Panchal SCJ:

[1] The appellant is the widow of late Mr Surinder Singh, who was murdered at about 9pm on 28 June 2007. Criminal Appeal No. 1660 of 2011 is directed against the judgment dated 20 October 2010 rendered by the learned single judge of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu in Criminal Revision No. 29 of 2008 by which the order dated 24 March 2008 passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Kathua framing charges under ss. 302, 109, 147 and 148 read with s. 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code, 1989 Smvt. (1932 AD) against respondents 3 to 7 is set aside and the matter is remanded to the learned Judge, Samba to consider the case in terms of ss. 267, 268 and 269 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989 Smvt. (1933 AD) (as applicable in the State of Jammu and Kashmir).

[2] Criminal Appeal No. 1661 of 2011 is directed against the order dated 20 October 2010 passed by the learned Single Judge of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu in the petition filed under s. 561-A CrPC, No. 54 of 2009 by which the prayer

A made by the respondent of the present appeal to quash the order dated 24 March 2008 passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Kathua in a criminal challan being File No. 33 of 2007 titled as *State v. Subhash Singh* framing charge against him for commission of the offences under ss. 302, 109, 147 and 148 read with s. 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code, is allowed.

[3] Criminal Appeal No. 1662 of 2011 is directed against the judgment dated 20 October 2010 passed by the learned single judge of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu in Bail Application No. 26 of 2010 by which respondents 3 to 7 have been released on interim bail pending trial against the respondents for the abovementioned offences.

[4] As the three appeals arise out of a common judgment and order dated 20 October 2010 rendered by the learned single judge of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in Criminal Revision No. 29 of 2008, the petition filed under s. 561-A CrPC, No. 54 of 2009 and Bail Application No. 26 of 2010, this court proposes to dispose of them by this common judgment.

[5] The case of the prosecution is that respondents 3 to 8 in Criminal Appeal No. 1660 of 2011 formed an unlawful assembly on 29 June 2007, the common object of which was to murder Surinder Singh and in prosecution of the common object of the said assembly, respondents 3 to 8 mounted a murderous assault on Surinder Singh, the husband of the appellant, at Village Sanoora, District Samba (J&K). The injured was immediately shifted to hospital for treatment. On the basis of the information given by the appellant, FIR No. 113 of 2007 under s. 307 read with s. 109 of the Ranbir Penal Code was registered at Police Station Hiranagar, in connection with the aforesaid incident on 29 June 2007.

[6] On 2 July 2007 injured Surinder Singh succumbed to his injuries in Military Hospital, Satwari, Jammu and, therefore, the offence punishable under s. 302 of the Ranbir Penal Code was added. On the basis of FIR lodged by the appellant, investigation was undertaken. During the course of investigation statements of the appellant and other witnesses were recorded under s. 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989. The dead body of the deceased was sent for post-mortem examination.

[7] After completion of the investigation, the investigating agency had filed the charge-sheet in the court of the learned Magistrate for the offences punishable under ss. 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code. As the offence punishable under s. 302 is triable exclusively by a Court of Session, the case was committed to the Sessions Court for trial. The learned additional sessions judge, after hearing the prosecution and the accused on the question of framing charge, framed the necessary charges on 24 March 2008 against each accused for the offences punishable under ss. 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code.

[8] Feeling aggrieved by the framing of the abovementioned charges by the trial court on 24 March 2008, respondents 3 to 7 in Criminal Appeal No.: 1660 of 2011 preferred Criminal Revision No.: 29 of 2008 before the High Court. The High Court by an order dated 6 June 2008 issued notice and summoned the record of the case from the trial court. On 20 March 2009, respondent 8, who is original accused 6, preferred Petition No.: 54 of 2009 under s. 561-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure to quash the order dated 24 March 2008 passed by the trial court framing charges against him for commission of the offences punishable under ss. 302, 109, 147 and 148 read with s. 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code. During the pendency of the abovenumbered petitions, the High Court by an order dated 13 August 2009 sent back the record to the trial court and granted liberty to respondents 3 to 8 to seek bail from the trial court.

[9] When the abovenumbered revision and the petition filed under s. 561-A were pending disposal before the High Court, the prosecution examined three eyewitnesses to the occurrence *viz.* (1) Santosh Kumari ie, the appellant herein, (2) Surishta Devi and (3) Shakti Devi. It may be stated that the appellant and Shakti Devi have fully supported the case of the prosecution.

[10] Pursuant to the liberty granted by the High Court *vide* order dated 13 August 2009, respondents 3 to 8 applied for bail before the trial court. The trial court rejected the bail application filed by the accused *vide* order dated 19 February 2010. The record of the case indicates that except accused Ikram, who is respondent 8 in Criminal Appeal No. 1660 of 2011, all the other accused filed Bail Application No. 26 of 2010 before the High Court claiming bail. The High Court by an order dated 10 August 2010 directed the learned counsel for the accused to place on record the deposition of the witnesses recorded by the trial court.

- A [11] On 13 August 2010, Raman Singh, the brother of accused Subhash Singh, who is respondent 3 in the main appeal, physically assaulted and threatened the son of the appellant as well as one Kuljit Singh who is one of the witnesses in the case, allegedly in the court premises itself, to refrain them from deposing against the
- B accused in the case. They were also warned that if they gave depositions against the accused they would be killed. Because of the assault mounted by the brother of the accused, the son of the appellant has lodged FIR No. 183 of 2010 under ss. 341, 195-A, 504 and 506 of the Ranbir Penal Code at Police Station
- C Samba. With reference to abovementioned FIR the statement of the son of the appellant was recorded under s. 164 CrPC on 20 August 2010.
- D [12] On 8 September 2010 and 7 October 2010 the prosecution examined two more eyewitnesses ie, (1) Raksha Devi and (2) Kamlesh Devi who had supported the prosecution case.
- E [13] The High Court by the order dated 20 October 2010 has set aside the order dated 24 March 2008 passed by the trial court framing charges against respondents 3 to 8 and has remanded the case to the trial court to consider it in terms of ss. 267, 268 and 269 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989. By the said order the High Court has directed release of all the accused persons except accused Subhash, who is respondent 3 in the main appeal,
- F pending consideration of the prosecution case for framing charge by the trial court. The abovementioned order dated 20 October 2010 of the High Court has given rise to the three instant appeals.
- G [14] This court has heard the learned counsel for the parties and has considered the documents forming part of the appeals.
- H [15] The provisions relating to framing of charge against the accused before the trial commences, are contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989 (1933 AD) which is applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The statute requires that every
- I charge framed under the said Code should state the offence with which the accused is charged and if the law which creates the offence gives it any specific name, the offence should also be described in the charge by that name only. The statute further requires that the law and section of the law against which the offence is said to have been committed has to be mentioned in

the charge. It is a fundamental principle of criminal law that the accused should be informed with certainty and accuracy the exact nature of the charge brought against him. The object of the statement of particulars to be mentioned in the charge is to enable the accused person to know the substantive charge he will have to meet and to be ready for it before the evidence is given. The extent of the particulars necessary to be given in the charge depends upon the facts and the circumstances of each case.

[16] It is well-settled law that in drawing up a charge, all verbiage should be avoided. However, a charge should be precise in its scope and particular in its details. The charge has to contain such particulars as to the time and place of the alleged offence and the person against whom it was committed as are reasonably sufficient to give the accused notice of the matter with which he is charged. One of the requirements of law is that when the nature of the case is such that the particulars mentioned in the charge do not give the accused sufficient notice of the matter with which he is charged, the charge should contain such particulars of the manner in which the alleged offence was committed as would be sufficient for that purpose. If A is accused of the murder of B at a given time and place, the charge need not state the manner in which A murdered B.

[17] Like all procedural laws, the Code of Criminal Procedure is devised to subserve the ends of justice and not to frustrate them by mere technicalities. It regards some of its provisions as vital but others not, and a breach of the latter is a curable irregularity unless the accused is prejudiced thereby. It places errors in the charge, or even a total absence of a charge in the curable class. That is why we have provisions like ss. 215 and 464 in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

[18] The object of the charge is to give the accused notice of the matter he is charged with and does not touch jurisdiction. If, therefore, the necessary information is conveyed to him in other ways and there is no prejudice, the framing of the charge is not invalidated. The essential part of this part of law is not any technical formula of words but the reality, whether the matter was explained to the accused and whether he understood what he was being tried for. Sections 34, 114 and 149 IPC provide for criminal liability viewed from different angles as regards actual participants, accessories and men actuated by a common object or a common

- A intention; and as explained by a five Judge Constitution Bench of this court in *Willie (William) Slaney v. State of MP*¹ SCR at p. 1189, the charge is a rolled-up one involving the direct liability and the constructive liability without specifying who are directly liable and who are sought to be made constructively liable.
- B [19] In the light of the above principles, the question whether proper charge was framed against respondents 3 to 8, will have to be viewed.
- C [20] In the present case, what was argued on behalf of respondents 3 to 8 before the High Court was that the charge was invalid because there was no mention in the order of the trial court indicating the specific offence found to have been *prima facie* committed by one or the other accused individually or jointly nor was there any indication regarding the specific names of the offences sufficient for description in the order of framing charge, but only sections of the law under which the offences were found to have been committed, were mentioned.
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- E [21] The High Court has held that mere mention of the sections of the law in the order framing the charge would not serve the purpose of law, as it was likely to prejudice the accused in his trial, and that the accused would be disabled to know the exact charge he had to face. In view of the abovementioned conclusion, the High Court has set aside the order dated 24 March 2008 framing
- F charge against the accused and has remanded the matter to the trial court to consider the case in terms of ss. 267, 268 and 269 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989 which are in *pari materia* with ss. 226, 227 and 228 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- G [22] In order to ascertain whether the charge framed against the respondents was proper or not, this court proposes to reproduce the order dated 24 March 2008 framing charge against Rajesh Singh, son of Jagdish Singh, resident of Sanoora, Tehsil Hiranagar,
- H which reads as under:

I 1. AIR 1956 SC 116 : 1956 Cri LJ 291 : (1955) 2 SCR 1140.

IN THE COURT OF ADDITIONAL SESSIONS JUDGE,
KATHUA

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I, Vinod Chatterji Koul hereby charge you, Rajesh Singh s/o Jagdish Singh r/o Sanoora, Tehsil Hiranagar as under:

1. That on 28-6-2007 at Sanoora at about 9.30 p.m. with criminal intention along with other accused persons, having common criminal object armed with lathies (sticks) committed rioting and in that attacked deceased Surinder Singh with an intention to murder him attacked and injured him seriously, who thereafter on 2-7-2007 during treatment succumbed to his injuries at Medical College Jammu, and you thereby committed offence punishable under Sections 302/109/147/148/149 of the Ranbir Penal Code and within the cognizance of this court.

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2. And I hereby direct you be tried by this court on the said charge.

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Dated 24-3-2008

sd/-

Statement of the accused dated 24-3-2008

Rajesh Singh s/o Jagdish Singh r/o Sanoora, Tehsil Hiranagar, caste Rajput, employee by profession aged ...

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Question: Whether you have understood the contents of the charge which has been read over and explained to you?

Answer: Yes.

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Question: Whether you have committed the offence?

Answer: No.

Question: Whether you want to say anything more?

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Answer: I am innocent and want trial of the case.

sd/-

[23] It may be mentioned that similar charge has been framed against each accused by the order dated 24 March 2008.

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[24] A fair and reasonable reading of the abovequoted order dated 24 March 2008 makes it abundantly clear that accused Rajesh Singh on 28 June 2007 at Sanoora about 9.30pm with criminal intention along with the other accused, having common object armed with lathies (sticks) committed rioting. Thus, the charge

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- A contains particulars as to the time, place and date of the offence of rioting. The law which creates the offence gives it specific name ie, "rioting" and, therefore, the offence is described in the charge by that name, namely, "rioting". The charge further proceeds to state that while committing rioting accused Rajesh Singh and the
- B others assaulted deceased Surinder Singh with an intention to murder him and injured him seriously. Thus the name of person with reference to whom common criminal object was formed by the members of the unlawful assembly was stated.
- C [25] It was also stated in the charge that during the treatment injured Surinder Singh had succumbed to his injuries on 2 July 2007 at Medical College, Jammu. Thus the date on which the deceased succumbed to his injuries and the place where the deceased succumbed to his injuries were mentioned with precision.
- D Finally, in the charge, it was mentioned that accused Rajesh Singh had committed the offences punishable under ss. 302, 109, 147, 148 and 149 of the Ranbir Penal Code.
- E [26] After framing charge, the plea of accused Rajesh was immediately recorded. The first question which was asked to him was whether he had understood the contents of the charge which was read and explained to him. In answer to the said question accused Rajesh Singh had answered in the affirmative. The record shows that thereafter two questions were put to accused Rajesh
- F Singh in answer to which he had claimed that he was innocent and had wished to be tried.
- G [27] This is not a case of mere mention of the sections of the law in the charge or the order of framing charge. Therefore, the High Court was not justified in observing that mere mention of the sections of the law in the charge was likely to prejudice the accused in his trial and that he would be disabled to know the exact charge he had to face, nor the High Court was justified in observing that the trial court was not alive to the provisions of Chapter XIX of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- H [28] It is necessary to reproduce part of the order passed by the trial court which is relied upon by the High Court for the purpose of coming to the conclusion that mere mention of the sections of the law in the charge or the order framing charge, would not
- I serve the purpose of the law. The said order reads as under:

Upon consideration of the arguments of the learned Public Prosecutor, the learned counsel for the accused and the written arguments besides the judgments cited and also the statements of the witnesses recorded by the police and other connected documents on the file, I am of the considered opinion that there are reasonable grounds to presume that accused Subhash Singh s/o Krishen Singh, Rajesh Singh s/o Jagdish Singh, Vijay Singh s/o Krishen Singh, Ranjit Singh s/o Baldev Singh, Rakesh Singh s/o Jagdish Singh and Ikram Singh s/o Neter Singh, caste Rajput, residents of Sanoora Tehsil, Hiranagar have *prima facie* committed offences punishable under Sections 302/109/147/148 and 149 RPC. Offence punishable under Section 302 RPC is exclusively triable by the Court of Session.

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Charges under Sections 302/109/147/148 and 149 RPC are framed against accused Subhash Singh, Rajesh Singh, Vijay Singh, Ranjit Singh, Rakesh Singh and Ikram Singh. The contents of the charges framed have been read over and explained to the accused persons who have pleaded not guilty to the said charges and have claimed to be tried ...

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[29] A glance at the order quoted above would reveal that at the stage of framing charge the learned counsel for the accused had pleaded for discharge of the accused under the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989. Not only had the learned counsel for the accused advanced oral arguments, but he had also submitted written arguments and cited judgments as well as statements of the witnesses recorded by the police and relied upon other connected documents on the file to emphasise that the accused should be discharged. The order of the trial court which is quoted by the High Court in the impugned judgment is not the order framing charge at all. It is a short order indicating that no case was made out by the learned counsel for the accused for discharging the accused at the stage of framing charge and that the accused should be tried for the offences which were mentioned in the order of framing charge separately against each accused.

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[30] On the facts and in the circumstances of the case, this court is of the opinion that a patent error of law apparent on the face of the record was committed by the High Court in coming to the conclusion that in the order of framing charge there was mere mention of the sections of the law which was likely to prejudice the accused in his trial, as the accused would be disabled to know the exact charge he had to face. Having noticed the charge which

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- A was separately framed against each accused, the inevitable conclusion to be reached by this court is that the High Court erred in law in holding that it was obligatory for the trial court to have indicated in its order and the charge-sheet the description of the offences for which one or the other accused had to be tried
- B because all necessary particulars which should be stated as required by law were already stated by the learned judge of the trial court while framing charge.

- C [31] Further, the fact that trial against the accused has/had made considerable progress in as much as material evidence of the eyewitnesses to the occurrences was recorded by the trial court could not have been ignored while deciding the question whether proper charge against each accused was framed or not. The nature of charge to be faced was clearly understood by each
- D accused which is evident from the plea recorded by the trial court after framing the necessary charge that the nature of charge was very well understood by each accused. The fact is also evident from the averments made in the revision petition which was filed by the accused challenging the order framing charge. The fact that
- E the charge was clearly understood by each accused is also evident from the nature of cross-examination of the eyewitnesses made on their behalf by their learned counsel.

- F [32] In view of the fact that all the eyewitnesses have been examined and cross examined on behalf of the accused, the High Court should have resorted to the provisions of s. 225 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1989 as applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir which reads as under:

- G **225. Effect of errors.** – No error in stating either the offence or the particulars required to be stated in the charge, and no omission to state the offence or those particulars, shall be regarded at any stage of the case as material, unless the accused was in fact misled by such error or omission, and it has occasioned a failure of justice.

- H [33] The cross examination of the eyewitnesses on behalf of the accused would indicate that none of the accused was in fact misled by the so-called error pointed out by the High Court nor could it be successfully pointed out by any of them that the so called error has occasioned failure of justice to him. The remand
- I of the case to the trial court for considering the case afresh on

the point of charge was not warranted at all, as there is nothing to suggest or indicate even remotely that the accused had or would have been misled by any error or omission in the charge. Therefore, the order dated 20 October 2010 rendered in Criminal Revision No. 29 of 2008 deserves to be set aside.

[34] For similar reasons the order dated 20 October 2010 passed by the High Court in the petition filed under s. 561-A CrPC, No. 54 of 2009 allowing the prayer made by respondent 8 to quash the order dated 24 March 2008 will have to be set aside.

[35] It may be mentioned that the order admitting the accused except accused Subhash Singh to interim bail of Rs25,000 each to the satisfaction of the trial court pending consideration of the prosecution case afresh on question of charge, was not warranted nor justified at all. Before granting interim bail to the accused the High Court could not have afforded to ignore the testimony of the eyewitnesses including that of the appellant who is the wife of the deceased, merely because the deceased had received only one injury nor the accused could have been accorded the benefit of temporary bail on the specious plea that they were facing trial over a period of three years. The record of the case nowhere shows that the prosecution was responsible in any manner at all for so called delay in holding trial against the accused.

[36] The fact that the accused are involved in commission of a heinous crime like murder which entails death or life imprisonment as punishment should have been taken into consideration before releasing the accused on interim bail. The trial court after having considered the gravity of the offence and the apprehension on the part of the prosecution that the accused would tamper with the evidence in the event of their release on bail had rightly refused to enlarge the accused on bail. The High Court while granting the relief of bail to the accused has completely ignored and overlooked the aforementioned relevant factors which weigh heavily against the accused.

[37] Moreover, the complaint filed by Vijinder Singh that he and Kuljit Singh, who is one of the witnesses in the present case, were physically assaulted and threatened in the court premises will have to be given its due weight. The FIR registered on 13 August 2010 is pending necessary investigation wherein the statement of Vijinder Singh who is the son of the appellant was recorded on

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- A** 20 August 2010 under s. 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The contents of the FIR would indicate that the accused either themselves or through their relatives would try to tamper the evidence which is going to be led by the prosecution in the case.
- B** **[38]** Under the circumstances, this court is of the opinion that release of the accused except accused Subhash Singh on interim bail deserves to be set aside. The net result of the above discussion is that all the three appeals will have to be allowed.
- C** **[39]** For the foregoing reasons the three appeals succeed. The order dated 20 October 2010 rendered by the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu in Criminal Revision No. 29 of 2008 is hereby set aside. Similarly, the order dated 20 October 2010 passed by the High Court in the petition filed under s. 561-A CrPC, No. 54 of 2009 is also set aside. The order dated
- D** 20 October 2010 passed in Bail Application No. 26 of 2010 by which the accused except accused Subhash Singh are enlarged on interim bail is also set aside. Accused Subhash Singh is already in custody. Therefore, it is directed that the other accused shall be taken in custody immediately.
- E**
- [40]** Having regard to the facts of the case and more particularly the fact that the trial has already commenced, the trial court is directed to complete the trial as early as possible and preferably within nine months from the date of receipt of writ from this
- F** court. Subject to the abovementioned directions, all the three appeals stand disposed of.

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